

**ABSTRACT**

The invention relates to activatable imaging probes that includes a chromophore attachment moiety and one or more, e.g., a plurality of, chromophores, such as near-infrared chromophores, chemically linked to the chromophore attachment moiety so that upon  
5 activation of the imaging probe the optical properties of the plurality of chromophores are altered. The probe optionally includes protective chains or chromophore spacers, or both. Also disclosed are methods of using the imaging probes for optical imaging.

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